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Biographic Sketch

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CHINA
General ZHANG Wannian
October 1995

~~(C/NF)~~ NAME: General Zhang (pronounced jahng) Wannian
(1728/8001/1628), People's Liberation Army (PLA).

~~(C/NF)~~ POSITION: Vice Chairman, Military Commission (CMC),
of the People's Republic of China since September 1995. Member
of the Central Military Commission since March 1993

~~(C/NF)~~ SIGNIFICANCE: General Zhang is a respected professional
with a background in both operations and command. He brings
with him proven combat experience, strong professional credentials,
recognized leadership qualities, a solid military education, and
strong ties to respected generals who are currently in
decisionmaking positions.

~~(C)~~ POLITICS: General Zhang is a reformist in both the economic and military logistic areas. He has
given several speeches that stress the need for security, development, concentrated efforts on economic
construction, and strengthening the modernization of national defense. He has served under a number
of China's current and retired veteran generals, such as Zhang Zhen, Xiao Ke, Liao Han-sheng, and
You Taizhong.

~~(C)~~ PERSONAL: General Zhang was born [redacted] in Huangxian (now known as Longkou),
Shandong Province.

Although people-oriented, he has been known to be arrogant and
harsh to his peers and subordinate officers.

~~(S/NF)~~ CAREER: General Zhang joined the 8th Route Army in 1944, during the Japanese war. He
began his military career in a unit of the Jiaoding Military District. After the Japanese surrender in
August 1945, his unit went to northeast China to become the second and then the fourth column of the
Northeast Democratic United Army (NEDUA). His unit was 1 of 12 regarded as "courageous in
combat style." General Zhang fought his first major battle in Northeast China at the battle of
Xinkailing, where the NEDUA annihilated a full Kuomintang division. He was promoted to company
political instructor. He further rendered "great meritorious services" in October 1948 in the 6-day
Tashan blocking action. The following year, he rose to Chief of the Northeast Field Army's
Communications Section. His unit was awarded the honored title of "Tashan Heroic Regiment."

~~(S/NF)~~ General Zhang did not fight in Korea. He served as regiment combat section chief and army
combat staff officer from 1950 to 1951 and deputy regiment commander and concurrent chief of staff
from 1956 to 1958. The period between 1952 and 1955 is unaccounted for. He was awarded the rank
of major and a Medal of Liberation Third Class in 1955. In 1958, General Zhang enrolled in the
Basic Studies Department of the PLA Military Academy. While at the academy, General Zhang
studied under now-Vice Chairman of the Military Commission Zhang Zhen, who was Deputy
Commandant and Commandant of the academy. After graduating in 1961, General Zhang was

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promoted to lieutenant colonel and appointed commander of the Tashan Heroic Regiment (later reorganized into the 123d Division of the 41st Army, subordinate to the 4th Field Army). His unit was stationed in the Shantou area of Guangzhou MR from May 1965 to October 1966.

~~(S/NF)~~ General Zhang was reported to have fought in Vietnam between 1967 and 1968, taking part in an attack on the US airbase in Danang. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In 1968, General Zhang became Deputy Director of the Operations Department of the Guangzhou MR. From June 1969 to February 1977, he was commander of the 127th Division of the 43d Army (and the 4th Field Army) in Wuhan MR. During this time he served once again under Zhang Zhen, who was the MR Deputy Commander (1973-75). During the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese war, General Zhang was the Deputy Commander of the 127th Division, [REDACTED]. He reportedly led the unit into Vietnam and successfully captured the city of Lang Son, the last decisive battle of the war.

~~(S/NF)~~ General Zhang is believed to have enrolled in the Senior Command Department of the PLA Military Academy some time in 1980. In 1981, he received another promotion to 43d Army Commander. General Zhang entered the Party's 12th Central Committee (CC) as an alternate member and became the Deputy Commander of the former Wuhan MR in September and November 1982, respectively. He became Deputy Commander of Guangzhou MR in June 1985, when Wuhan MR merged into Guangzhou MR. He also was on the MR's Party Standing Committee. General Zhang was elected an alternate member of the 13th CC in November 1987. In December of that year, he succeeded You Taizhong as the Commander of Guangzhou MR. He was in place when China fought a sea battle with Vietnam in the Spratlys. Though it was a purely naval operation, he was the head of the frontline general command. In 1988, General Zhang personally directed Guangzhou MR's first-ever joint service command post exercise aimed at its overall capability to defend China's coastline and maritime territory and interests. The exercise received high marks from then-Deputy Chief of the General Staff Han Huaizhi and other training experts from the Academy of Military Sciences and the National Defense University. When rank was reinstated in October 1988, General Zhang was awarded the rank of lieutenant general. Also while commander of Guangzhou MR, he created China's first rapid-reaction unit for contingency missions. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He reportedly was admitted into a hospital for an unknown illness during the June 1989 military crackdown in Beijing.

~~(S/NF)~~ General Zhang was reassigned to Jinan MR during the May 1990 MR commander reshuffle. One of the major functions of Jinan MR is to assist in the defense of Beijing. Jinan MR units also often are tasked by the PLA General Departments to conduct pilot schemes in army reform. Experimental results delivered under his command including the establishment of a standardized division training system, improved night training, and simulated training for communication personnel were highly praised by the central authorities. He remained the commander of Jinan MR until October 1992, when he was selected to be Chief of the General Staff Department (GSD) and awarded full CC membership. Subsequent to his promotion to Chief of the General Staff, General Zhang was elected a member of the MC and the CMC. He was promoted to his current rank in 1993. In September 1995, Zhang relinquished his position as Chief, PLA GSD, and was appointed Vice Chairman, MC.

PREPARED BY: [REDACTED]

DIA/PAC-2, [REDACTED]

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